THE SHAKERITE

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PARKED

With classes hard to access and costs increasing, getting a license at 16 is getting tougher

Photo illustration by Emma Barker

We're not Taking the Right to Ask Questions for Granted

For two weeks this September, The Shakerite Editorial Board hosted each of the six candidates running for a seat on the Board of Education. We interviewed them about topics ranging from our weapons-detection system to DEI programs to budget concerns.

ISABEL SIEGEL
Editor in Chief

We weren't just interviewing candidates on a whim — in October, our editorial board will carefully review everything we know about each candidate, then vote to endorse three for the three open seats. It's a responsibility we don't take lightly.

Being primarily an editor for the past two years, I've strayed from the reporter's side of the newsroom. This year, I became reacquainted with it as I developed a list of questions to ask each candidate about the issues that our editorial board believes are most relevant in this election — especially to high school students, teachers and parents.

As our editorial board brainstormed, we focused on gun violence and security, school facilities, budget concerns, the achievement gap and the federal government's intervention in public schools. Later, I developed each of these concerns into specific, sharp questions to ask the candidates. With each interview, I became more confident in prying for stronger answers from each of the candidates. I learned how to ask the right follow-up questions to gather more details about facts or statistics they referenced. I learned to not accept a vague answer, but to dig deeper and find the information we needed.

But meeting with these candidates, seated just a few feet away from me, and being allowed to ask them these hard questions is a privilege. Across the country, journalism is under attack. In February, the Associated Press was told that unless it aligned its editorial standards with President Donald Trump's executive order renaming the Gulf of Mexico as the Gulf of America, it would be denied access to the Oval Office, Air Force One and other limited spaces.

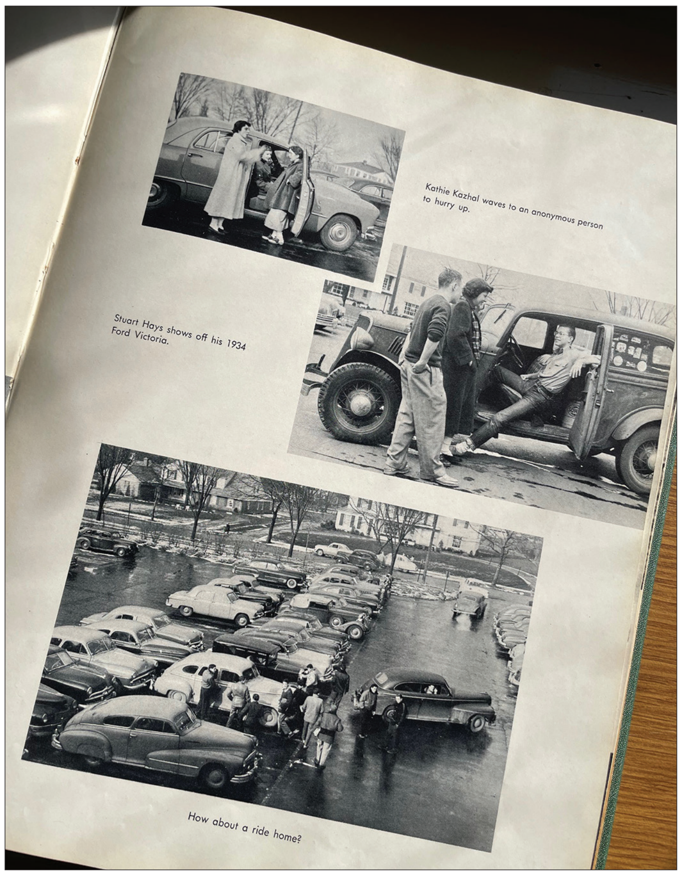
Most recently, the Trump administration has said that it will revoke credentials of journalists covering the Defense Department if they won't pledge not to obtain or publish any information, even unclassified, unless it has been expressly authorized by the government.

Journalists aren't treated as essential communicators of information and awareness; they're viewed, both by the Trump administration and much of the public, as adversaries. Reporters increasingly struggle to access elected officals and political candidates, let alone to demand answers the public deserves.

The Nov. 4 election may only be for local offices, but that doesn't make it unimportant. Having the right to do our job and ask questions that the community needs us to ask is vital. So, we encourage our readers to stay in contact with us. If there is something that you feel you don't have adequate information about — a question unanswered by the administration, the school board, or anyone else — let us know. Compose a letter to the editor, reach out via email, send us a social media message or leave a comment on one of our web stories. We'll provide the answers you need.

Journalistic barriers may be increasing nationally, but that doesn't mean we won't continue to provide relevant news to our community. Our readers deserve the unfiltered truth, and journalists don't deserve pushback for seeking it.

In This Issue


Kathie Kazhal waves to an anonymous person to hurry up.
Stuart Hays shows off his 1934 Ford Victoria.
How about a ride home?

Page 59 of the 1953 Gristmill features three photos of students and their cars. Driver's education used to be part of the high school curriculum.

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Design Managing Editor

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With classes hard to access and costs increasing, getting a license at 16 is getting tougher

I don't have my driver's license. The thought of strapping myself behind the wheel of a two-ton rolling death machine terrifies me.

My little brother, two years my younger, just got his permit, and it's looking increasingly likely that he will get his license before me — much to the protest of the rest of my family. For him, like so many others, driving is the solution to the problem of getting around. I don't have this problem. Most of the places I need to go are close enough from home to walk, and, even if they are relatively far, I enjoy walking. I can't say the same for driving.

When I try to explain this to people who urge me to get my license, the typical response is something along the lines of "But you should know how to drive," or, "But you'll want to be able to drive eventually."

Maybe I will. Maybe future me will hate me for not getting my license. But that's future me's problem. For now, I can't be bothered to learn to do something I hate in order to solve a problem I don't have.

Sorry, future me.

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Shaker parent Troy Jordan speaks about community participation in policy discussions during the Sept. 9 Board of Education meeting in the high school's small auditorium.

Shaker Schools

VOTERS EXAMINE ROLE OF SCHOOL BOARD

Once elected, BOE members face community's high expectations

CHARLIE HOWELL
Spotlight Reporter

In an unprecedented election, six candidates will compete for three Board of Education seats Nov. 4.

The last time board seats were on the ballot was November 2023, when four candidates competed for two open seats. This year, six candidates are competing for three seats, a large number compared to previous elections. A review of the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections archive shows that since 1983, there have been no races featuring that many candidates; for most elections, the number of candidates equaled the number of seats.

"I do think the number of candidates willing to serve on the Board of Education reflects the dedication and enthusiasm residents have for their Shaker Heights school system," Shaker Heights resident and Realtor Liz Schorgl said.

This year's candidates are incumbent board President Lora Cover; longtime Ludlow neighborhood resident and architect Kevin Dreyfuss-Wells; entrepreneur Ardelia Holmes; attorney Kate Nielson; former interim principal of the high school James Reed III; and communications professional Jenny Steadman.

Senior Sarah Galin said that she is registered and plans to vote in November. "For gov class, we can go to an activity fair and learn about the different candidates and meet with them. But also I'm planning on talking with my parents and doing my own research," she said.

Galin said that student voters have especially important views. "I think our opinions are very validated because we have to be here for four years, and it feels like we don't really have a say sometimes," she said.

According to state and local law, BOE responsibilities include selecting a superintendent, approving an annual budget for the school district, considering recommendations from the superintendent, and adopting policies for the governance of the school district. The five members of the board meet regularly to fulfill these duties.

"I believe the role of the Board of Education is to steward the well-being of all students. This includes providing educational opportunities and safety. A positive environment for learning and experiencing life as a child should also be encouraged by school board members," Schorgl said.

"I have immense respect for school board members. It's one of the hardest jobs in Shaker," Shaker Heights City Council member Sean Malone said.

Malone has served as a councilman for a decade and said he works closely with the school board on a number of issues.

"The importance of the board is huge," Malone said. "People won't invest in the community if there isn't a great public school district."

Senior Leah Reymann said that she is looking for a candidate who is genuine and stands for the community. "Being genuine, to me, doesn't mean you put 'Black Lives Matter' or 'equality' on a site just because you think that's what people want to hear. It's something that you believe in," she said.

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>
> Leah Reymann

Aside from the everyday responsibilities of running a school district, the board's impact stretches to other aspects of the community such as the value of homes. "The district's role is fundamental to real estate values in Shaker Heights," Malone said.

The quality of public schools in any Ohio community drives demand for housing, causing property values to increase and benefiting residents.

Cooperation between the council and the BOE is important given the ongoing renovations of educational facilities in the city such as the Ludlow Early Learning Center and the future Woodbury campus. "Many facilities have to be renovated and replaced," Malone said.

Students aren't aware of the BOE, according to sophomore Benny Kerr. "The school board is unknown to most students," he said.

Kerr said that new members of the school board should do a better job providing students the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes.

Schorgl said that outreach is crucial. "The board should not assume they are reaching everyone by asking people to come to them," Schorgl said. The district should make an effort to tell the story of Shaker schools, including its integration. According to Schorgl, telling these stories would build a positive relationship with the community.

Senior Maya Kestin said that she is looking for a school board candidate who "knows what they're doing, [is] kind and respects everybody equally."

The three candidates elected Nov. 4 will take office in January.

BOE CANDIDATES IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Lora Cover

My name is Lora Cover, and I'm running for re-election to the Shaker Heights Board of Education and supporting the operating levy because I believe deeply in the power of public education and because our students, our community and our staff deserve leaders who will both celebrate what makes Shaker special and push for the changes we need to thrive.

As a former teacher and longtime leader in education, I've spent my career making sure schools and nonprofits put students, families and staff at the center of their decisions. Since joining the Board, I've worked with my colleagues to launch the largest facilities modernization in district history, expand pre-K so more of our students start school ready to succeed, and develop goals to make sure that we are focused on what matters – our students succeeding in and out of the classroom.

Looking forward, my priorities are clear: making sure every child has access to excellent, engaging instruction; ensuring our teachers and staff have the support they need to do their best work; and managing district resources responsibly so that Shaker remains strong for generations to come.

These are challenging times for public schools, locally, statewide and nationally. But I know the strength of this community, and I believe we can keep moving forward. I would be honored to continue serving Shaker Heights students, families and educators for another four years. And hearing from students firsthand is critical, so please continue to reach out and share your ideas.

Ardelia Holmes

I am a longtime Shaker resident, a mother of children across grade levels, and a candidate because I believe Shaker must become what it has long claimed to be: a true model of equity and excellence.

I have walked both sides of this district inside classrooms as a temp employee, in leadership as a high school PTO officer, and as a parent navigating the system with my own children. I know the promise of Shaker, and I know where we continue to fall short.

Professionally, I bring the lens of an entrepreneur, strategist and economist — someone who has built systems where transparency and measurable outcomes are not optional. I believe our district finances must be tied directly to student outcomes. Equity is not a slogan; it is how we budget, how we measure progress and how we hold ourselves accountable.

My priorities are clear: make equity the standard operating practice, ensure special education access is fair regardless of income, and strengthen trust between families, students, staff and leadership through visible, accountable presence. Representation matters. A board that does not reflect or respond to its full community cannot lead it forward.

Structural issues are not excuses for delay, they are the very reason to act now. We cannot wait for the "long haul" while children are failed in real time.

This campaign is not about one seat. It is about building a district where justice is visible in classrooms, finances and leadership, because our children cannot wait.

James Reed

Hello, my name is James Reed, and I am running for Shaker School Board. I have been a Shaker Heights resident for over 62 years, and my four children are graduates of SHHS. As a long-time educator and Shaker resident, I am the only SHHS graduate who has served as the principal of SHHS. I have been working in education for over 33 years, where I started as a middle school teacher and then became an administrator. During my time as an administrator, I have served as principal at Cleveland Heights High, Shaker Heights High, Beachwood High, St. Edward High School, Campus International, and as building administrator for Chardon High School.

I believe that my career experiences give me a unique insight into the operations of schools of various types – large, small, public, private, urban, suburban, diverse, not diverse, and differing curricular focuses. In short, all the concerns that are present in Shaker Schools currently. The common objective of all the aforementioned schools is the same – optimizing student success, that would allow its students to succeed at the highest level.

The community of Shaker Heights is special and unique in many ways, but I believe that it is only pushed to excellence through the common thread of education in our schools. I have always believed that this community's greatest responsibility is to give its youngest members the tools that will help them become leaders of this state, this nation and the world. And I take that responsibility very seriously.

Kevin Dreyfuss-Wells

I believe in community. It's why I'm an architect. It's a profession that requires understanding people, organizations and communities, their culture, challenges and opportunities, then finding creative solutions to common problems.

Community is why we chose to live in Shaker Heights 17 years ago, returning to where my wife grew up. It's why we love living in Ludlow, a place rich with wonderful people, spanning two cities but one united neighborhood. And it's why we chose Shaker Schools for our son, from Onaway to graduation.

Because I value my community, I serve it. Through work on local community organizations' boards, appointments to bodies like the City Planning Commission, and committees like Forward Together and the Shaker Facilities Advisory Committee, I've learned how our community works. I've built networks of neighbors and local officials and learned how to get things done.

That action includes my work making the Ludlow pre-K a more community-centered place, replacing planned pavement with a substantially larger playground. I led neighborhood stakeholders and advocated to the schools, city and foundation to re-design and fund a better, greener place for preschoolers and neighborhood kids alike.

I believe that we achieve better results when we deeply involve the entire community in two-way dialogue, sharing our concerns, our insights and our hopes. If elected, that community-centered approach will be my focus, finding ways to engage students, parents, teachers and neighbors in finding solutions that build opportunity for every student and make our community stronger.

Kate Nielson

I'm Kate Nielson, a Shaker alumna and parent of young students at Ludlow and Onaway. These important perspectives are not currently offered by other Board members or candidates. As an attorney and policy advocate with experience working on education, gender equity, economic security and civil rights, I can also help the district navigate policies that impact our schools.

The role of the Board is to support the administration to fulfill the mission of the District, while holding the superintendent and treasurer accountable. I support passage of the levy, and I will ask the tough questions to ensure the compromises that are inherent to making budgetary decisions reflect the priorities of the community. I will listen to students, families and teachers to discern where individual problems need tailored solutions, or systemic issues require broader responses.

My priorities are ensuring 1) the pre-K program is successful and accessible to all families, leading to prepared learners, a shrinking achievement gap, and eventual cost savings through reductions in the need for remedial instruction, 2) our teachers feel supported and have the resources to successfully teach students in a detracked environment, 3) all students feel a sense of safety and belonging, and can reach their full potential, and 4) the district is successfully communicating with multiple stakeholders, including about shortcomings and areas for improvement.

On the Board of Education, I will use my policy expertise and advocacy skills to realize the promise of Shaker. I humbly request your vote and partnership to achieve these goals.

Jenny Steadman

I am running for Shaker Heights School Board because every child deserves to feel safe, physically and mentally, supported, and prepared to succeed. As a longtime community volunteer and advocate, I've worked on local and national campaigns, raised funds, organized neighbors and stood up for issues that matter, especially public education and reproductive justice. That experience has taught me how to listen, bring people together and fight for progress.

My priorities are simple but essential: ensuring that every student has the resources they need to thrive — equity of equality — and that every teacher and staff member has the tools to do their jobs well.

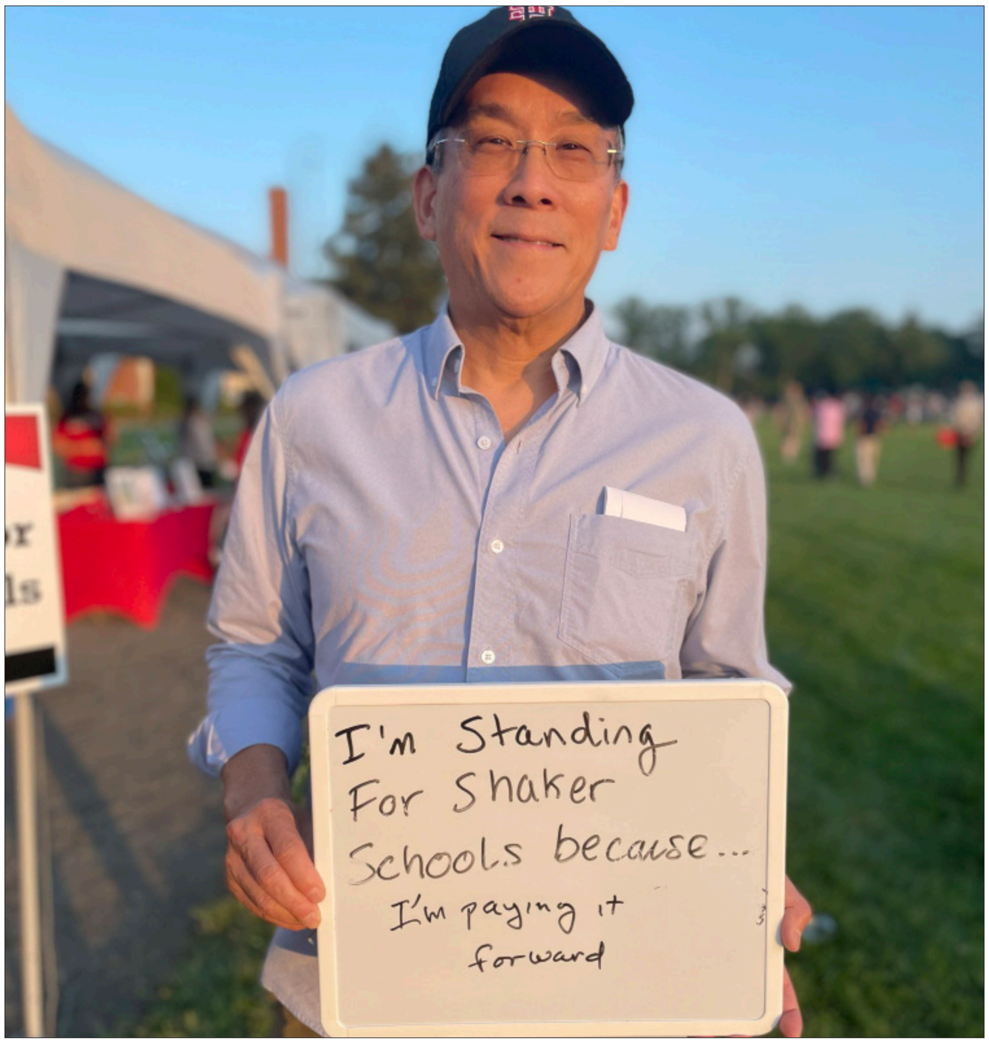
I know the challenges we face — state and national governments that cut funding, limit mental health resources and push against the needs of our schools. But here in Shaker, we can choose differently. We can invest in our kids, our teachers and our community.

Our community motto says, "A community is known by the schools it keeps." I want to restore pride in that truth, strengthen communication between the board and the public, and ensure our schools reflect the very best of Shaker Heights. Together, we can keep Shaker moving forward.

DISTRICT SEEKS 1ST OPERATING LEVY SINCE ’14

Rising costs and a state law that freezes tax revenue compel districts to the ballot

EMMA BARKER
Policy Reporter



BOE member Doug Wang displays support for Issue 51 during a Stand Up For Shaker event. *Courtesy of Caitlin Johnson*

Like many public school districts across Ohio, the Shaker Heights City School District is facing challenging times — uncertainty from the government, rising inflation and higher operating costs.

The district has placed a 9.9 mill operating levy on the November ballot. The district hasn’t asked for a full operating levy since 2014. This operating levy would pay for staff, day-to-day operations and activities.

According to Stand Up For Shaker Schools, a campaign that has been organized to inform the community about the levy, the measure would “fund staff salaries, classroom materials, programming, utilities and transportation.”

Caitlin Johnson, a co-chairwoman of the Stand Up For Shaker Schools committee, said that the levy is “to maintain what the district has already budgeted for.”

The district is asking for this levy because the money that the district is projected to spend will eventually be more than the money it receives. According to the district’s Five Year Forecast, “By the end of 2029, the cash balance is projected to decline by a total of $44,742,273 compared to 2024. For fiscal year 2029, expenditures are currently projected to exceed revenue, resulting in a revenue shortfall the final year of the forecast period.”

Stand Up For Shaker Schools said this 9.9 mill levy will cost someone who owns a $100,000 property about $29 per month.

The April 7 Board of Education meeting summary states that “Waiting beyond November 2025 would significantly increase the risk of fiscal instability,” and if action is not taken, “The district could face state oversight of loss of local control due to fiscal caution or emergency status.”

Ohio school districts such as SHCSD rely heavily on property taxes, whereas districts in rural, lower-income communities rely heavily on state funding. Property taxes constitute about 70 percent of SHCSD revenue. Due to the city’s lack of commercial property, the majority of these taxes fall on residents. Thanks to House Bill 920, state law since 1976, property tax revenue is frozen so it doesn’t increase with inflation. It was introduced to stabilize property tax revenues during a time when property values were increasing. According to the Ohio Education Policy Institute, HB 920 is also the main reason that Ohio relies on local levies more than any other state.

HOW HB 920 AFFECTS SCHOOL FUNDING

According to Caitlin Johnson, who co-chairs the pro-levy group Stand Up For Shaker Schools, Ohio law holds the amount of revenue that a property tax collects in place to the dollar, but inflation means those dollars lose value over time.

“So, while your expenses are going up because of inflation, because the cost of living is going up, your revenue is staying flat and actually losing value, and that is what’s happening with the school,” Johnson said.

Because of HB 920, districts must pass new operating levies in order to receive revenue based on the current value of properties in the community.

However, this also means that no matter how much the value of a property increases over time, the tax dollar amount the school receives remains the same.

Meanwhile, the cost of everything — employee salaries, insurance, textbooks, Chromebooks, fuel — has increased over that 11-year period, but the district’s revenue has not. Stand Up For Shaker Schools states the district’s property tax revenue has only increased about 1.2 percent during that time.

“Shaker was able to stretch in between operating levies for 11 years because we got a big influx of federal aid during Covid. We also lived through a period of very low inflation. Now, federal funding has run out, and inflation is really high, so if you want to have your revenue keep pace with inflation, and expenses in the cost of living, and the cost of running a school, you have to go to voters,” Johnson said.

Some community members have spoken out against the levy due to the financial stress they’re facing. Other vocal critics in community Facebook groups have expressed concerns about how the district spends tax revenue.

According to shaker.org, the levy is designed to help the district maintain a sustainable budget for a future that will include less federal education funding. According to the Center for American Progress, “The Trump administration has rescinded or frozen more than $10 billion in support for K-12 education.”

About 30 to 35 percent of Shaker’s budget comes from state and federal funds. One of President Donald Trump’s first items of business was to begin dismantling the Department of Education. If approved, Trump’s 15 percent budget cut would reduce about $760,951 from the district’s budget, and around $12 billion from schools nationwide.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN OPERATING LEVY AND A BOND ISSUE

The district is seeking the 9.9 mill operating levy two years after voters approved another district tax request.

In 2023, the district placed a 6.45 mill bond issue on the ballot, and it passed. That bond, as well as a $30 million bond voters approved in 2017, pay for major construction projects such as the long-term facilities master plan. That plan, currently underway, includes renovating all elementary schools and transforming Woodbury Intermediate School into a new middle school. Bond funds cannot be used to pay for operating costs.

Operating levies, such as Issue 51, on the other hand, fund day-to-day expenses including salaries, utilities and educational materials. The district has not gone to voters with an operating levy request since May 2014, when 62.5 percent of voters approved it.

“We have state politicians and people in the state house who just do not want to fund public schools. So it’s up to us in the community to fund them. In Shaker we’ve always come together and we’ve done it,” Johnson said.

So what happens if the levy doesn’t pass? The district will have to find other ways to cut costs such as layoffs, bigger classes, fewer extracurricular activities and fewer course offerings.

Some cuts have already occurred. Last year, the district cut three of its five English Language Learner positions. The high school Theatre Arts Department was absorbed into the “Performing Arts Department.” There is no art teacher for Lomond Elementary School, and Ludlow Preschool does not currently have a nurse on campus.

The district has stated that it aims to make reductions that will be as least disruptive as possible to students and staff. In a March 19 email and video message sent to the community, Dr. David Glasner, superintendent, said that the district was looking at strategies that would, he hoped, avoid layoffs. “Our priority has been to make staffing changes as far away from the classroom as possible,” he said.

Early voting begins Oct. 7. Election Day voting occurs Nov. 4 from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Polling locations are on the Ohio Board of Elections website.

Photo illustration by Camryn Dozier

BRAKING FROM TRADITION

Required hours, costs, anxiety are reasons why eligible students wait to get a driver's license

NATALIE BETTER
Copy Editor

A generation ago, turning 16 meant keys, freedom and the open road. Today, teens are hitting the brakes on getting their license.

"I'm too busy to do the tremendous amount of work that comes with getting a license," junior Daria Mirodon said.

Earning a driver's license takes commitment and patience. It's a process that spans no less than six months, often more when preparation is accounted for. At 15 and a half, teens can apply for a TIPIC — a temporary instruction permit identification card — by passing a knowledge test and vision screening and paying a $23.50 fee.

The TIPIC allows student drivers to operate a vehicle on a public road with a licensed adult in the car. This permit enables them to complete the necessary in-car driving requirements to obtain their probationary license, such as accumulating driving hours and practicing behind the wheel to become a safe and well-trained driver.

The Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles provides the Ohio Digest of Motor Vehicles online handbook and practice tests to help students prepare for their temporary permit test, though many turn to driver's education apps instead.

Junior Delaney Willis said she used the DMV Practice Test Genie app because the practice tests it offered were nearly identical to the real test she had to take. "A lot of the questions were the same," she said. "The books didn't help me much."

For other students, the online handbook provided by the Ohio BMV barely played a role in their preparation. "I did, like, a couple practice tests," Junior Mollie Brem said. "I didn't even use the book."

But securing the TIPIC is just the beginning.

Students must hold a TIPIC for at least six months while completing 24 hours of classroom or online education, eight hours of behind the wheel training and 50 hours of supervised practice driving. Ten of those driving hours must occur at night. All student drivers must have the 50-hour affidavit signed by a parent or guardian before obtaining a license.

However, Willis said that not all students follow through with this requirement. "As long as your parents sign the paper, you're good to go," Willis said. "Hardly anyone I know actually completed the time requirement."

Driver's education has a long history in the United States. Formal programs began appearing in the 1930s, often through high schools in major cities, combining classroom instruction with in-car training to reduce accidents among young drivers.

At Shaker, the tradition dates back to the late 1930s, when the high school offered a Driving Club extracurricular. The 1938 Gristmill states that "the club offers us an opportunity to obtain some accurate information of the fundamental laws and regulations and mechanical knowledge necessary to those who drive. An attempt is made to make new drivers conscious of the possibilities of automobiles as potential menaces, not properly handled."

According to the U.S Department of Education, car ownership grew and traffic increased in the post-war years, accelerating demand for formal driver training. What had begun in the 1930s as small clubs and pilot courses expanded into full-fledged school programs by the 1960s, with policymakers seeing driver's ed as both a safety measure and a social necessity.

By the 1960s and 1970s, nearly every state, including Ohio, had mandatory or optional driver's ed. Shaker Heights High School offered a robust in-school program.

Kiki Stout ('73), now administrative executive assistant, participated in this program. "It was a good experience because you weren't always in the car with a stranger," she said. "I think having it at school would work out, especially because it made you feel more comfortable and supported."

She remembered being picked up in the school parking lot for lessons and being paired with classmates in the car. "It alleviates some of the stress," she said.

Current students feel some of the same anxieties. Junior Nataleigh Rupprecht described being alone with a driving instructor as uncomfortable. "I don't know. It's just awkward that I'm in the car alone with a random old man, and he can tell me where to go and you can't really do anything about it," she said. "It's just sort of creepy."

According to Zippia, an online career resource platform, 29.7 percent of all driving instructors are women, while 70.3 percent are men. The average driving instructor age is 43 years old.

The unease students describe today echoes concerns that have long surrounded driver's ed. For every teen feeling awkward with an unfamiliar instructor, there's a parent worrying about the same thing. Not just safety on the road, but also trust in who is teaching their child.

Stout, whose own children graduated from Shaker in the 1990s, reflected on her own experience raising three children while navigating the driver's ed system. As a parent, she said it was hard to trust who her children learned to drive with. "They're strangers," she said. "From a parent's point of view, it would have been nice if my kids had that opportunity [to have driver's ed in school]."

According to a 2009 report by NBC News, by the 1990s, many public schools had cut driver's ed programs due to funding cuts, shifting instruction to private driving schools. This change created equity issues, particularly for students who could not afford the fees or lacked transportation to get to classes.

The gap is not just financial but also geographic. According to the Ohio Department of Public Safety, there are more than 700 licensed driving schools statewide, but availability varies regionally.

Reporting by the Ohio Driver Education and Training System notes that, in some counties, there are fewer than two schools per 10,000 eligible teens, creating long waitlists. In Northeast Ohio, popular schools report booking out for four to six weeks in advance, while rural areas may not have a school within 25 miles.

Even if students can access driver's education classes, soaring costs are delaying completion. While the state charges just $23.50 for a permit and $25.75 for a first license, driver's ed course fees in Ohio average $300 to $700, close to the national average of $550 but still a steep barrier to becoming a licensed driver.

Add that to the rising cost of auto insurance — which is more than 80 percent higher than a decade ago — and the first year of driving can cost between $1,400 and $4,000.

Junior Maisie Fredricks is aware of these challenges. "There are numerous difficulties that come with getting a license now. More prevalently, it's the cost," she said.

> "We would get more thorough driver education. I would trust myself more on the road if I got extra instruction."
>
> Daria Mirodon

In practice, this means that the path to a license depends heavily on a student's zip code, family finances, and the availability of instructors.

One of Cleveland's driving schools, Overbeke School of Driving, is known for its structured instruction, high pass rates and even a specialized program for those with ADHD, but also for its scheduling challenges.

Both Willis and Rupprecht passed on their first try through Overbeke. Rupprecht described the process as "chill."

"It took me a couple months to do the online driver's ed, but I was able to do it in my own time. My in-cars were just four days in a row scheduled at relatively the same time, so the schedule was easy to follow," she said.

For Willis, the biggest challenge wasn't the coursework, but the availability of lessons. "It was hard to schedule because it was always booked," she said. "I had to go during school. Scheduling was just hard because everyone was doing it."

Meanwhile, Safe Pass Driving School, where Brem took lessons, made scheduling simple.

Brem, however, had a different experience with Safe Pass Driving School. "It was easy to book," she said. "I told them the dates and times I wanted, and they gave me what I wanted."

All of these roadblocks have led to a decline of licensed teens in Ohio – dropping 23 percent for 16-year-olds and 7.3 percent for 18-year-olds since the turn of the century.

Once students navigate the coursework, behind-the-wheel training and skills tests, students can finally earn a probationary license. Restrictions remain in place until age 18, including curfews, passenger limits and a full ban on cellphone use.

Those restrictions are meant to give teens time to build safe habits. But for lawmakers and safety advocates, the bigger concern has been older first-time drivers who bypass training altogether.

However, the road is now longer for those older students hoping to obtain a license.

Until recently, anyone over the age of 18 could bypass driver's education if they already had a temporary permit. Starting Sept. 30, the law will change in part of House Bill 96 and the state budget. All drivers younger than 21 must complete the same instruction as 16- and 17-year-olds: 24 hours in the classroom and eight hours behind the wheel.

Some older teens counted on bypassing driver's ed by waiting. "I was disappointed because I had planned to wait and skip driver's ed, but I also realize it probably never should've been allowed in the first place," said a senior who did not want to be named because he didn't want to be embarrassed about not yet driving. "If you're on the road, you should have the same training no matter if you're 16 or 20."

The change was driven by safety concerns. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in 2024, 58 percent of fatal crashes caused by teen drivers included 18- or 19-year-olds. Nearly half of those drivers had been licensed for less than a year, and more than a third had never taken driver's ed.

For some, that danger makes driving more intimidating. "It's terrifying to get in the front of a car and be responsible for not only your own life, but also anyone with you or around you," Fredricks said. "It's also hard to trust other drivers."

Rupprecht said that schools could help fill those gaps. "I feel like if we had extra instruction in a classroom setting and learned at school with our peers, it would make us a lot more comfortable and confident on the road because of our similarities and trust in each other in a way," she said.

Mirodon said that she would trust herself more if driver's ed was offered in school. "I would have a head start and I would feel more prepared if they taught at least some of it in school," she said. "We would get more thorough driver education. I would trust myself more on the road if I got extra instruction."

That's an idea that Dr. John Moore, director of curriculum and instruction, said he finds compelling.

> "Driving is just one of those life skills, and giving students that opportunity in a safe, supported way — that's the kind of experience this district has always been about."
>
> John Moore

Part of his role is setting students up for internship opportunities and after-school work to support their interests. He said the number one barrier for these students is transportation. "They can't often get to some of these places who say, 'Wow, I really want to have you as an apprentice or an intern,' " he said. "For me that's a compelling case for why it makes sense for high schools to take this back."

Still, he acknowledged the challenges. "In order for us to do something like this, we would need teacher training and certification, and we're already stretched thin," he said.

Gov. Mike DeWine acknowledged these barriers when he proposed expanding access to driver's ed as part of the House Bill. His plan included subsidies for low-income families and pilot courses to bring driver's ed back into schools. But when lawmakers finalized the budget, the funding disappeared while the new requirements stayed in place.

Moore finds the outcome ironic. "One of the concerns was that if we fund schools to teach driver's ed again, that would be unfair competition [with these private driving schools]," he said. "Meanwhile, we're defunding public education and putting a lot of money in private schools. So it feels a bit like a double standard."

Fitting another class into students' schedules would be hard and would force tough decisions. "Young people would have to make a tough choice between something like ceramics and driver's ed. I don't love that young people have to make those tough choices," Moore said. "The more we layer on there, the tougher that students' schedule becomes, and it becomes more and more difficult to offer some of the rich courses that we do."

Moore said driver's education may eventually return to Shaker in a new format, such as weekend or after-school classes in partnership with private instructors handling the in-car portion. He said that such classes could be supported by the government.

For families, the debate over how best to prepare students for the road mirrors a larger question the district has always faced in Moore's eyes: how to balance tradition, opportunity and equity in ways that serve every student.

Moore said driving is more than just a skill; it's preparation for life. "Driving is just one of those life skills," he said, "and giving students that opportunity in a safe, supported way — that's the kind of experience this district has always been about."

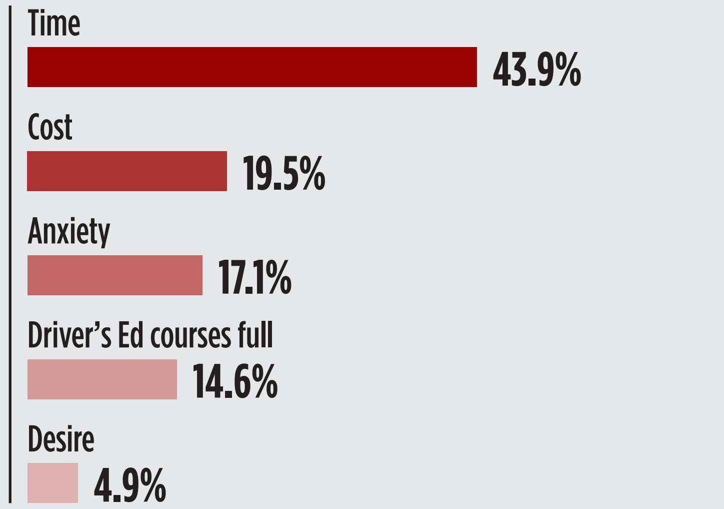
Said Mirodon, "Schools shape us for our future — and driving is part of our future. It's not optional; it's essential, and it's a skill we can't do without."

Student Survey

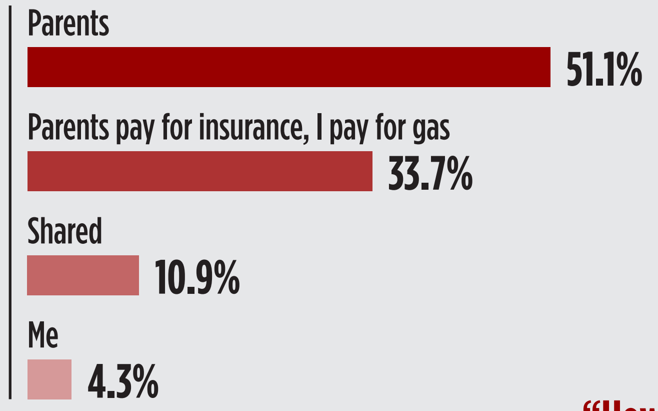
By the #s

Data compiled from a Sept. 16-17 Shakerite survey about students' experiences with driver's education and licensing. The Shakerite sent English teachers of 10th-12th grade students a survey link and asked them to share it with their classes. The survey received 150 responses.

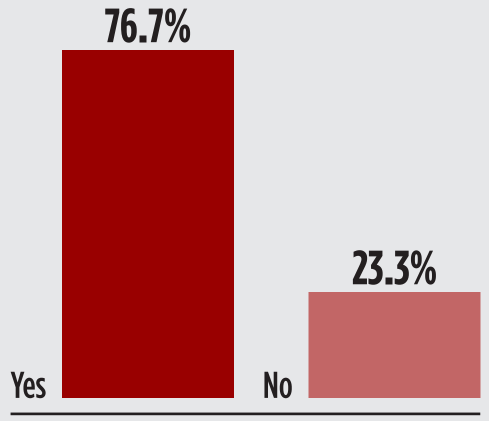
Q: If you are eligible and do not have permit/license, why not?



Q: If you are are a licensed driver, who pays for insurance and gas?



Q: Some school districts partner with driver's education companies to enable students to complete Ohio's driver-training requirements. Should Shaker schools do the same?



> "How can the school tell students to figure out their own transportation but not help them gain the skills to transport themselves?"
>
> anonymous student

THE SHAKERITE

Sept. 26, 2025
Volume 96, Issue 1

Assistant Principal Logan Cawley hands an ID to sophomore Jasyme Allen in the cafeteria during arrival Sept. 18. Cawley taught in public and private schools before coming to SHHS. *Camryn Dozier*

NEW AP LOGAN CAWLEY AIMS TO ALIGN WITH COMMUNITY

CATE WANICK
City Reporter

Assistant Principal Logan Cawley's path to an education career wasn't always clear.

"Teaching was not always my plan," Cawley said. The 2013 graduate of Pennsylvania State University earned a bachelor of science, believing medical school was in his future. "I had a full intent on going to medical school. I did all the things for medical school. I took the MCAT and made sure I was involved on campus in ways that were meaningful," Cawley said.

Logan Cawley

Cawley has filled the post vacated by Elizabeth Massey, who assumed the associate principal role vacated by James Dubsky.

Cawley's plans changed when a friend recommended applying for Teach for America, a program that sends recent college graduates to districts in need around the country. "There are plenty of communities where people are waiting in line to go and teach in those communities, but there's other communities where they're just like, 'Can we get someone to come in and work here?' " he said.

Cawley taught at a school in the Bronx in New York City. "While I was teaching at that school, I uncovered a passion for education and a passion for teaching," he said.

"I just found out what I was doing was so fulfilling and rewarding, and so I decided I'm just going to be an educator for the rest of my life."

During his 13-year teaching career, Cawley taught AP Biology, chemistry and marine science at Hawken School, as well as physics and physical science for Rocky River City Schools. Cawley said that his love for science is what drew him to teach the subject. "I always loved science class. I found how life works to be truly fascinating. I still do. I'm still, like, a huge science nerd," he said.

Cawley said he knew that he wanted to return to public schools. "I always knew I wanted to get back into working in a public school because that was my lived experience. I'm a firm believer in public education," he said.

In 2024, he earned a master of education and educational leadership degree from John Carroll University. Cawley said that when the assistant principal position opened up at Shaker, he was excited to apply because he'd had his eye on the district. "Shaker's been on my radar since I had learned about Shaker Heights and everything the school has to offer," he said.

Cawley is in charge of communications and daily life at the high school. His goal is to improve arrivals, class transitions and motion around the building. "I try to do my best to hear from everyone as we're trying to make things more efficient and effective," he said. Cawley is working to reduce the time students spend waiting in line throughout the day to pass through weapons detection, receive passes, buy lunch and use the microwave. He is also working to increase the efficiency of emergency preparedness.

> **"I just found out what I was doing was so fulfilling and rewarding, and so I decided I'm just going to be an educator for the rest of my life."**
>
> Logan Cawley

Sophomore Saya Walters said that she has noticed Cawley around the building. "He seems very high energy when he's walking around the cafeteria, but he seems very chill when he's talking to students," Walters said.

Sophomore Ava Mason said that Cawley "is the GOAT. The way he carries the pens in his pocket is aura," she said, using the current compliment for stylish, nonchalant confidence.

"I'm a big believer in that when you join a community, you should be really aligned with that community," Cawley said. He said that when people are aligned with their community, it makes their work more genuine and authentic, and that he is taking every chance to better connect with students, families and staff to achieve that alignment.

He said that Shaker has been "the most special" because of the camaraderie of the students, staff and the community. Said Cawley, "I'm just thrilled to be here."

VOTE
☐ KIDS LIVES
☐ YOUR GUN

Senior Leah Reymann leads students during the Sept. 5 walkout in protest of gun violence. The high school's participation in the national walkout was organized by juniors Zoie Durham and Nora Kaelber, and followed the shooting of two SHHS students in Maple Heights Aug. 30. Senior Jayden Bonner was killed, and another student was wounded. *Photo by Camryn Dozier.*

NATIONAL PROTEST NEEDS LOCAL FOLLOW UP

'Rite Idea

On Sept. 5, we walked out for gun violence. In 2023, we walked out for gun violence. In 2022, we walked out for gun violence. In fact, we've been walking out for gun violence since March 2018, when Shaker students first organized a protest in response to the Parkland, Florida school shooting.

Walkouts, by their nature, are therapeutic. Composing snappy chants in bright marker on posterboard, venting fears and frustrations into a megaphone, watching throngs of students gather on the front lawn — these are all valid outlets for our emotions. But what else does a walkout achieve? You could call them a call to awareness — except that Shaker students are anything but ignorant of gun violence. You could call them a united statement from the student body — but students chatted on the front lawn, ignored the actual protestors, and participated in lewd dancing, embarrassing those in attendance who actually cared. Furthermore, can it even be defined as a protest? Students were excused from classes and allowed to return and eat lunch. There was no sacrifice involved in the protest, and no consequences for attending.

So why have we gathered to walk out for gun violence three times in the last four years? When the next school shooting occurs, will we dust off our signs, unlock the gym doors and march out again? Or is it time for a different form of protest?

For years, Shaker students have been joining nationwide protests initiated by Students Demand Action, a group launched two weeks after the Parkland shooting. But joining national protests isn't effective – we need to focus on what we can achieve locally. Students should bring their attention to administrators, the board of education and state legislators. The Students Demand Action website doesn't just present dates for national walkouts – it allows you to search for events near you organized by Students Demand Action volunteers, and opportunities to join groups in your community. It provides resources about state and federal bills that students should be aware of.

> When the next school shooting occurs, will we dust off our signs, unlock the gym doors and march out again?

Students could advocate for improvements in our security system here at the high school. In our second year of weapons detection, we still enter in the morning to inconsistent security screening. Weapons detection still disturbingly varies depending on which entrance you go through, which teacher or security guard checks your bag, and what time of day you arrive. Furthermore, weapons detection should be expanded to the middle school and the IC. Students could demand that at least one security guard be employed at district elementary schools so that administrative assistants are not the only defense against an intruder. Students could advocate for secure storage resolutions. In incidents of school violence, three-quarters of school shooters acquired their firearm from the home of a parent or close relative. The Students Demand Action website encourages students to bring their attention to the school board, and urge them to pass a secure storage resolution and send letters about secure storage home to parents. We could even reconsider how we carry out active shooter drills. Are they actually helpful, or do they only increase anxiety levels? How can we implement strong training and procedures in the case of a shooting on campus – for example, are students and staff aware of what to do, and who to contact first if they hear gunfire or see a weapon on campus?

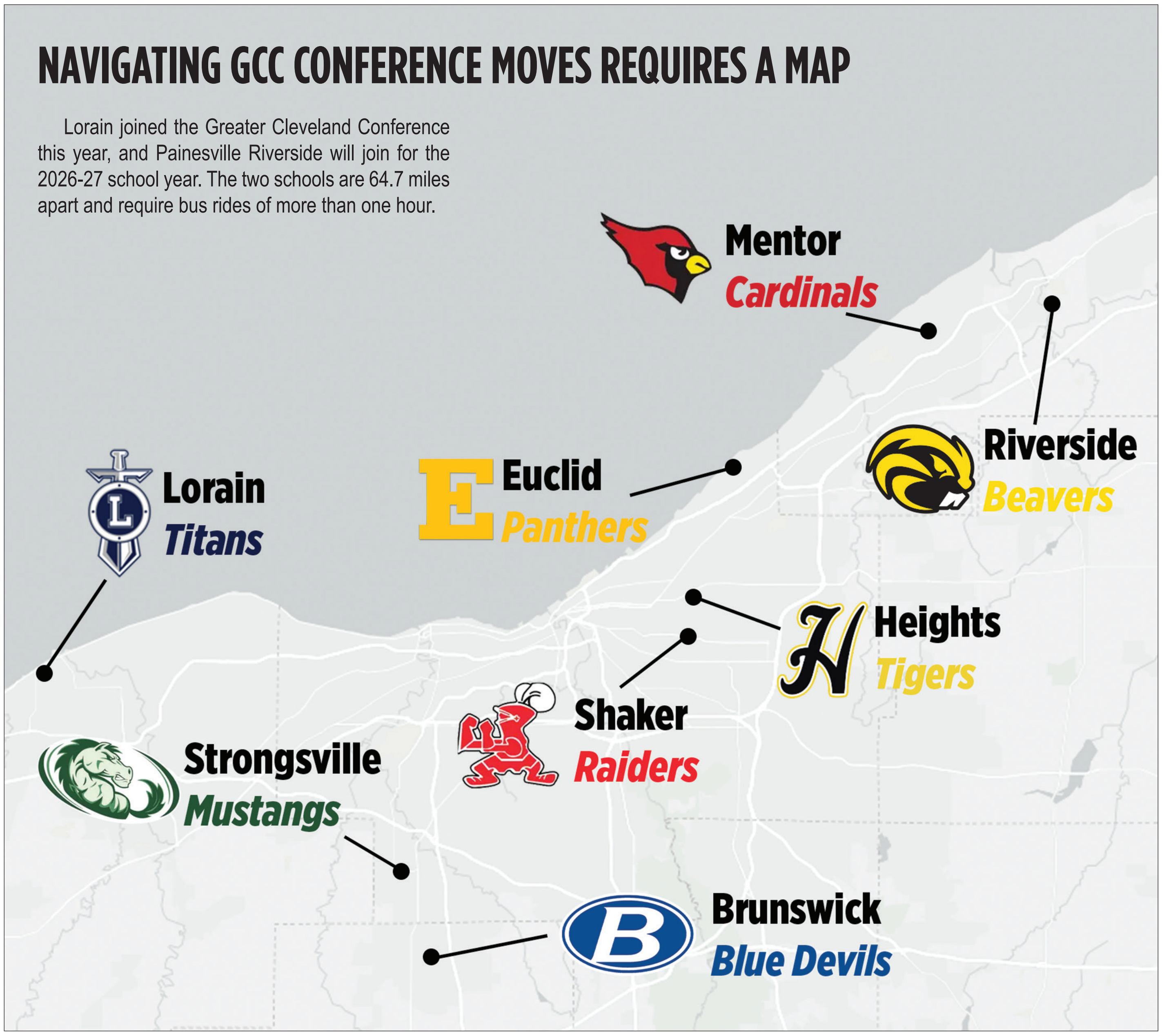
These are specific, local issues that can be addressed through student advocacy. Using our voices to achieve these goals would make our schools safer. We should not wait for a crisis to occur before taking action, as the district, with some community members' support, did for decades about weapons detection. Only after two knives and a handgun were confiscated from three students outside of the high school in the span of a week last September did we finally decide to implement a security system.

Repeating the same form of protest we have executed for years without result isn't productive. We need to make our voices heard about gun violence. But let's take the next step – what can we do without the signs in hand?

WHEN IT COMES TO CONFERENCES, CHANGE IS THE RULE

SPENCER ZBANEK
Raider Zone Editor

NAVIGATING GCC CONFERENCE MOVES REQUIRES A MAP



Lorain joined the Greater Cleveland Conference this year, and Painesville Riverside will join for the 2026-27 school year. The two schools are 64.7 miles apart and require bus rides of more than one hour.

Alison Teeter

The Greater Cleveland Conference is set for another round of realignment, and Shaker Heights will be forced to adapt to the changing high school sports landscape.

Medina will leave the GCC for the Suburban League following the 2025-26 school year. Medina Athletic Director Todd Hodkey said the school district is excited to join the Suburban League. “This transition will provide schools with closer proximity, reducing transportation time and costs while maintaining the high-quality competition we’ve experienced in the GCC,” he said.

Lorain joined the GCC at the start of this year. Lorain Athletic Director Brian Koury said joining the GCC fits for Lorain historically. “Most of the existing GCC schools were in the Lake Erie League back when we originally joined, and we have competed against all of the schools in the GCC in non-league play in recent years, so there is definitely a familiarity,” he said. Lorain initially joined the LEL in 1923.

Painesville Riverside will also join the GCC following the 2025-26 school year. Painesville Riverside Athletic Director Dave Bors said the GCC fits their desire to test their athletic abilities. “We look forward to showcasing the dedication, talent and pride of our community,” he said.

Shaker Heights Athletic Director Mike Babinec said conference shifts are about logistics. “It’s about trying to reduce travel and trying to find schools that are good fits with you from an athletic standpoint,” he said. “A lot of it is also driven by football, if you play the same sports as schools and what relationships you have with schools.”

The Suburban League is expanding in response to the departure of member schools Kent Roosevelt, Cuyahoga Falls and Tallmadge, which announced plans to leave for the Metro Athletic Conference beginning in the 2026-27 school year.

Kenston and Mayfield Heights, former members of Painesville Riverside’s current Western Reserve Conference, will join the Suburban League in the 2026-27 school year along with Medina.

The Ohio High School Athletic Association expanded its football playoffs from four to seven divisions in 2024. Now, a typical playoff region includes 12 schools, making conference prestige crucial to postseason seeding.

For the Raiders, these changes come a few years after Shaker Heights rejoined the GCC in 2023, alongside rival Cleveland Heights. “We’ve always had a kinship with Cleveland Heights. If there is one school we would hitch our wagon to, it would be them because of the proximity, history and tradition,” Babinec said.

Shaker Heights previously left the GCC in 2019 to return to the LEL, citing travel times, geography and diversity concerns. Cleveland Heights joined the LEL in 1928, while Shaker Heights joined in 1923.

Babinec said that the Raiders’ rivalries aren’t erased by conference shifts, but have evolved uniquely. “I think it’s unique for us because I think the rivalry depends on the sport. For basketball, it’s always going to be Cleveland Heights and Garfield Heights. But field hockey has to drive all the way down to Columbus to play a good game. Other sports, I don’t know if there are those rivalries. I don’t think it’s a byproduct of changing conferences,” Babinec said.

The GCC was established in 2016 with eight founding members: Brunswick, Elyria, Euclid, Medina, Mentor, Shaker Heights, Solon and Strongsville.

Beginning in the 2026-27 school year the GCC will comprise Brunswick, Cleveland Heights, Euclid, Lorain, Mentor, Painesville Riverside, Shaker Heights and Strongsville. The conference has lost three of its original eight members in 10 years.

Elyria left the GCC in 2021 to join the Southwest Conference, and Solon left in 2023 to join the Suburban League. A rumor of Brunswick following Medina to the Suburban League has gained traction on Facebook and X in recent months, said Babinec. “I think it’s speculation at this point, but I would not be surprised in the next year or two that Brunswick and Strongsville are out of the GCC. They’ve been open about the fact they’re looking,” Babinec said.

Babinec said travel efficiency was a key factor in Solon’s switch. “Instead of going to Mentor, Strongsville and Medina, they were able to get into a conference with Twinsburg, Stow and Aurora, so from a time standpoint it’s a great fit for them,” he said.

Babinec said that schools work hard to maintain their relationships even after conference switches. “You are always looking for the best fit that has the most impact for the most amount of kids. We have really good relationships with the LEL schools. We play those schools in a lot of non-conference sports,” he said. “If Solon called me tomorrow and said, ‘We’d like to form a conference and we have these schools in mind,’ we’d be stupid not to listen.”

Koury’s point about the GCC schools’ historical rivalries is supported by Cleveland Heights, Elyria, Euclid, Lorain, Mentor and Shaker Heights spending significant time in the LEL. Of the list, Cleveland Heights served the longest in the LEL from 1918-2023 while Mentor spent the least from 1993-2011.

Babinec said community pressure doesn’t make it easier to find similar schools. “I have people call me and say, ‘Why don’t you just join a conference with schools that are like Shaker?’ I say, ‘If you can find me seven other schools that are like Shaker, I’ll pay you,’” said Babinec. “We’ve been looking, but there’s not a lot of communities that match our diversity.”

> **“You are always looking for the best fit that has the most impact for the most amount of kids.”**
>
> Mike Babinec

Junior field hockey captain Zoie Garnett works the ball up the field Sept. 12 at Russell H. Rupp stadium. *Camryn Dozier*

GARNETT LEADS FIELD HOCKEY TO PERFECT START

GRAHAM GURNEY
Raider Zone Reporter

Junior field hockey captain Zoie Garnett, a centerback, helped lead the Raiders to a 9-0 start.

A three-year varsity player and first-year captain, Garnett said effort has paid off; she attributes her leadership to her work ethic. “Hard work and really working in the off season got me to where I am today,” Garnett said.

Junior defensive midfielder Liz Wilson said Garnett is a natural leader. “She communicates so much and supports you on and off the field,” Wilson said.

Zoie Garnett

Head coach Ashley Boorstein said that Garnett has been vital to their team’s success. “She’s a huge component, always speaking out of the backfield to organize the defense,” Boorstein said. “She’s super aggressive and explosive in the way she defends, which creates confidence among all of her teammates.”

Garnett applies her aggressive defense in an unorthodox position called “free Hallie.” Typically she would play centerback, marking one opponent. Instead Garnett doesn’t defend anyone specifically; she covers a zone underneath the 25-yard line to double team opposing players to get the ball faster.

The Garnett-led Raiders defeated rival Thomas Worthington 2-1 on Sept. 12, then defeated Bishop Watterson Sept. 13, the third-ranked team in the nation according to MaxPreps. The MaxPreps algorithm, which determines rankings based on a team’s win-loss record and the quality of teams beat, then ranked the Raiders No. 1 in the nation.

The Raiders have reached the state semifinal game for 13 consecutive years but have not won the state title. Garnett said that past defeats fuel the Raiders to make it back to states. “We all know that we have unfinished business,” Garnett said “Whether it’s the way we practice, or a warm-up for a game, everything is focused on the prize.”

Said Garnett, “Every day I try to get 1 percent better than the last day.”

R.O.M

Senior defensive end Jacques Penn wrestles an opponent Sept. 19 at Russell H. Rupp stadium. *Camryn Dozier*

RETURNING TO FOOTBALL, PENN FINDS CONFIDENCE

MAIZY MACHMER-WESSELS
Assistant Raider Zone Editor

After stepping away from the sport as a child, senior defensive end Jacques Penn has returned to football to tackle quarterbacks for the Raiders.

Penn first started playing at 7 years old for a Shaker youth team, The Brawlers, but didn’t enjoy the physical side of the sport and quit. He didn’t return to football until his sophomore year, joining the team to be part of a school activity. “What made me want to continue playing was the team environment and the fact that our varsity team went to playoffs in 2024 with a record of 7-4,” Penn said.

Now a 6-foot-2-inch, 208-pound senior, Penn plays defensive end with a goal to help his teammates make their plays. “I basically make [the quarterback] feel uncomfortable to make it easier for others to tackle,” he said.

Head football coach Alex Nicholson said that Penn has grown as a player. “His playing is night and day from last year to this year. He’s violent. He’s hitting people. He’s doing his job and flying around,” he said.

Penn noted changes in his confidence. “As I got bigger and made more accomplishments, my confidence grew, too,” he said.

Senior captain Isaac Smith said that Penn is a strong leader. “Jacques is a key factor to our amazing defense as well as a great role model for younger players,” he said.

Nicholson said that Penn’s hard work makes him a model teammate. “He’s a really easygoing guy. He just wants to work really hard, and doesn’t really say a whole lot,” Nicholson said.

Jacques Penn

For Penn, the team’s environment is just as important off the field. “On the field our climate is really competitive and disciplined,” he said. “Off the field, the team is like a family.”

Said Penn, “We hang out, look out for each other in school and make sure everyone is in a good place.”

THE SHAKERITE

Sept. 26, 2025
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SEPTEMBER HOT TAKES

1. Wikipedia is more trustworthy than Trump's .gov sites. Looking for answers? Don't go to .gov!
2. Our field hockey team doesn't get the recognition it deserves. Go, Raiders!
3. Cats are better than dogs. If you like dogs more, you are lying to yourself.
4. Tylenol doesn't cause autism. Uh·see·tuh·mi·nuh·fin
5. Vacations are more stressful than relaxing. You never get any privacy, and you're always in a rush!

OPS

THE
ONE-PAGE
SHAKERITE

TOP 5 FRENCH FRY CUTS

5. Shoestring: *They're excellent for seasoning!*

4. Crinkle cut: N*ice crunch on the outside, and soft on the inside.*

3. Steak: *Great for dipping into sauce.*

2. Curly: *That bold, zesty flavor really reels you in.*

1. Waffle

Crisp exterior, soft interior. The larger, unique shape creates a perfect surface for seasoning and sauce!

Cheers & Jeers

HOMECOMING DANCE EDITION

Cheers to crowd surfing. Get his legs!
Jeers to falling down. Ouch.

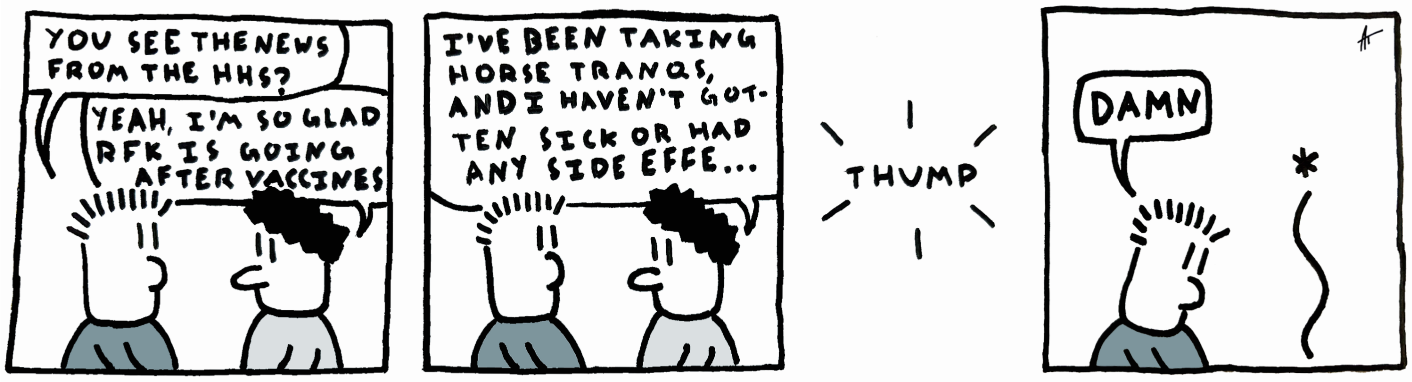
Cheers to dressing up. Who doesn't like looking good?
Jeers to unbearable heat. Sweating in a necktie and suit jacket is gross.

Cheers to cute Homecoming signs. Don't forget flowers!
Jeers to being rejected. Hope you had fun with your friends.

Cheers to MGK not showing up. We didn't need him anyway.
Jeers to Kid Cudi not showing up. "Man On The Moon" beats anything MGK.

ON CAPITOL HILL

BY ALISON TEETER


YOU SEE THE NEWS FROM THE HHS?
YEAH, I'M SO GLAD RFK IS GOING AFTER VACCINES
I'VE BEEN TAKING HORSE TRANQS, AND I HAVEN'T GOTTEN SICK OR HAD ANY SIDE EFFE...
THUMP
DAMN

THE meh LIST

Dancing with the Stars
Donuts
Fortune cookies
Hulu
Crocs

Raider Rant

Attack of the Water Bottles

BY ABBY HAHNENBERG

Imagine this: You're sitting in a silent, white-walled classroom surrounded by 20 of your peers, staring at your Chromebook and racking your brain on your math test. You're completely zeroed in, and when you finally think you're starting to understand the question . . . BOOM! A massive metal water bottle falls to the floor with an ear-shattering crash. As all heads snap toward the site of the offense, all of your once poised focus is ruined. So, for the good of all the poor test-taking souls, I beg: Don't. Kick. Your. Water. Bottle. During. A. Test. Thank you.

This Should be a Word

alanidiction

noun

the condition of one who must consume an Alani energy drink every day at school

CHERRY TWIST
Alani Nu
ENERGY
ENERGY DRINK
8.4 FL OZ

Raider Rant

There's No Place Like the Hallways

BY LARA SESENOGLU-LAIRD

If you want to stop and chat with friends, the best place to do it is obviously in the middle of the hallway. It can't be anywhere else, because how else would you learn about your friend's new boyfriend? Classrooms are boring and uncool, and bathrooms just aren't big enough to contain the sheer importance of your four-minute conversation. Hallways offer perfect ambience for these crucial life moments. Standing between these cream-colored, cracked walls, students bustling behind you, allows your voice to be heard nice and loud — the perfect spot to talk, really.

COMING UP ON THE BIG SCREEN

Oct. 17 • horror
Black Phone 2
Oct. 24 • drama
Regretting You
Nov. 14 • thriller/crime
Now You See Me: Now You Don't
Nov. 21 • musical/fantasy
Wicked: For Good
Nov. 26 • family
Zootopia 2

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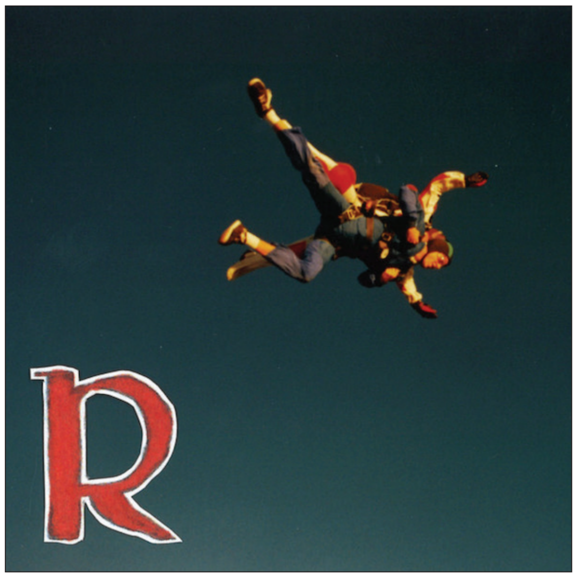

New Music

R is for Rocket, Rocket

Oct. 3

Following the success of their 2023 debut EP "*Versions of You*," Los Angeles-based Rocket are set to release their full-length debut, "*R is for Rocket,"* Oct. 3. The fuzzy, dynamic lead single "Wide Awake" is reminiscent of '90s alt-rock. Rocket opened for the Smashing Pumpkins over the summer and cites the 1990s alternative band as an inspiration. They say the album name references a Radio Flyer song of the same name. It's also the name of a collection of Ray Bradbury stories published in 1960.